

**THE DYMALLY-ALATORRE BILINGUAL SERVICES ACT - PART II**  
**ENFORCEMENT & CONCLUSIONS**  
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Despite the “Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act” having been in effect since 1973, there still appears to be ambiguity in the enforcement of its provisions. As reported in the publication “New America Media” dated November 23, 2010, an audit found the enforcement of the Act’s provisions to be dismal. State as well as local government agencies were found to be “not adequately fulfilling a decades-old law”.

Eight of the ten state agencies audited did not have adequate procedures to maintain updated information of clients’ needs. It was pointed out that some agencies were unaware of this legislation and their administrators had no knowledge it even existed. The audit reported that “only 52 percent of state administrators and 64 percent of local department managers knew of the Act.” This lack of awareness also included the lack of knowledge that forms had to be translated to meet the needs of populations they serve. Also of interest is that “53 city and county departments have identified a need to provide bilingual staff and translated materials in 33 languages, yet they do not offer any bilingual services for 19 of these languages and provide only limited services for the remaining 14 languages.”

Unlike other pieces of legislation, the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act is a model legislation that has withstood the test of time in its almost 40 years of existence. The California politicians who sponsored this legislation must have envisioned their long-standing legislation as a means to deter language barriers and have both state and local agencies become responsible for effectively communicating with the populations they serve to ensure marginalized consumers gain full access to services.

This legislation provided legitimacy to the art of translation, both verbally and written, making bilingual services a skill, not just an ability. In turn, qualified staff that perform the service were allowed to be compensated in the form of a monetary bonus. The most important part of the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act was, and still is to this day, how a population that has little or no political clout, unable to communicate effectively, is viewed as an important and a viable entity that governmental agencies need to address on a continuous basis. This is essential for clinicians to understand as we advocate for our consumers and serve the needs of all communities within Los Angeles County.